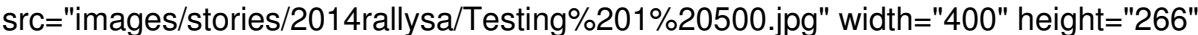


Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Gelsomino head into this weekend's fourth round of the Australian Rally Championship determined to increase their championship lead after winning two of the opening three rounds.

 Scouts Rally SA is traditionally the coldest and wettest round of the championship, and it's also the event that Reeves has contested the most, so he's quietly confident of success.

The Victorians and their Mazda2 hold a 16-point lead in the championship, and a successful test session this week has improved the car's speed for when the event gets underway on Friday afternoon.

Testing went really well, although it was wet and slippery for the entire two hour session, Reeves said.

We changed the gear ratios in the car to give us a bit more top speed, and the extra 10km/h we have found could prove important on what is the fastest round in the championship.

A few changes to the car's aerodynamic package should also help the Mazda stick to the road better at high speed.

We tested for a couple of hours and we've made some good steps forward, Reeves added.

We wore out a set of front tyres in the two hours, so the car is putting the power to the ground really well, the brakes felt good, and the car was lots of fun to drive.

Scouts Rally SA gets underway with qualifying and the Power Stage on Friday morning, with three stages to be held in the afternoon.

Already, organisers have been forced to cancel some stages because of the recent wet weather, and with wind, rain and a temperature of just eight degrees forecast for day one, conditions will be challenging.

The forest stages will certainly be slippery, but the traditional shire road stages that the rally is famous for should still be quite grippy, as they have a really good gravel base, Reeves explained.

Our plan for this event is to push hard from the start and see how the car feels.

Although there are only three stages on Friday, there are 20 championship points on offer for the winner, so it's important that we make a good start.

Saturday's stages are worth 40 points, while a further 20 points are on offer on Sunday.

It's a scenario that will see Reeves attacking hard, rather than the more conservative approach he took at the endurance event in Queensland in May.

We can't afford to be slow out of the blocks. This is a sprint rally and there are points on offer each day, so we need to go hard from the outset.

We're feeling confident though. Rhi and I have done this rally more than any other as we perfected our pacenoting on the South Australian roads early in our careers, so we know the area and many of the stages quite well.

But we need to ensure we score points over the whole weekend as well. Our championship lead is just 16 points, so building on that is our goal over the next few days.

The rally kicks off with the ARMOR ALL Power Stage on Friday morning, followed by three forest stages that afternoon to open Heat One. Heat Two covers 10 Special Stages totalling over 116 competitive kilometres on Saturday, before Heat Three, on Sunday, covers a further 10 stages and 78 kilometres of flat out action.

Reeves' other major rivals will include the Team Citroen Australia cars of Tony Sullens and Adrian Coppin, local driver Jack Monkhouse (Nissan Silvia), and Michael Boaden's Volkswagen Polo.